1: Thurston & Rangachari E,G-4,5 (no date) 1909
AW50 Badaga AW50

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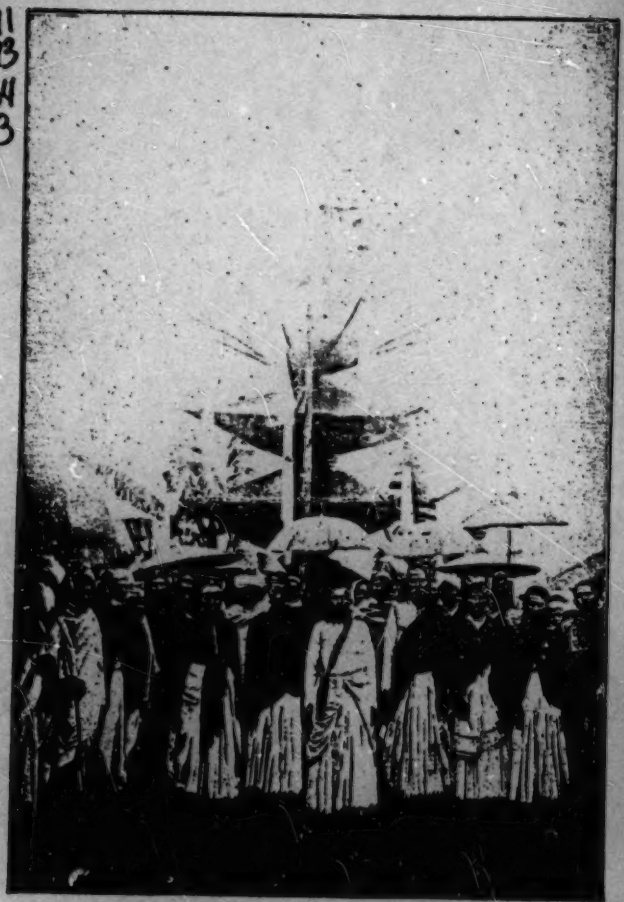

BADAGA FUNERAL CAR.

[Facing p. 119]

1: Thurston & Rangachari E,G-4,5 (no date) 1909
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764 woman). May he become united with the men of his clan and caste."

The funeral rites of the Udayas differ in some important details from those of the Badaga sub-division. The buffalo catching, and leading the animal round the corpse, are omitted. But a steer and heifer are selected, and branded on the thigh, by means of a hot iron, with the lingam and other emblems. Bedecked with cloths and jewels, they are led to the side of the corpse, and made to stand on a blanket spread on the ground. They are treated as if they were lingams, and pūja is done to them by offering cocoanuts and betel leaves, and throwing flowers over them. Round their necks kankanams (marriage threads) are tied. They are made to turn so as to face away from the corpse, and their tails are placed in the hands thereof. An elder then proceeds with the recitation of the dead person's sins. The Udayas bury their dead in a sitting posture in a cell dug out of the side of the grave, and, like the Irulas, prefer to use a grave in which a previous burial (824) has taken place. At the four corners of the grave they place in the ground a plant of *Lencas aspera*, and pass a cotton thread laterally and diagonally across the grave, leaving out the side opposite the cell. Two men descend into the grave, and deposit the corpse in its resting place with two lighted lamps.

769 In 1905, an elaborate Badaga memorial ceremony
• 493 for ancestors called manavalai, which takes place at long intervals, was celebrated on the Nīlgiris. I gather from the notes of a Native official that an enormous car, called ēlu kudi tēru (seven-storeyed car) was built of wood and bamboo, and decorated with silk and woollen fabrics, flags, and umbrellas. Inside the ground floor were a cot with a mattress and pillow, and the stem of

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769 a plantain tree. The souls of the ancestors are supposed to be reclining on the cot, resting their heads on the (493) pillow, and chewing the plantain, while the umbrellas protect them from the sun and rain. The ear ornaments of all those who have died since the previous ceremony should be placed on the cot. "A Badaga fell and hurt himself during the erection of the car. Whereupon, another Badaga became possessed, and announced that the god was angry because a Kurumba had something to do with the building of the structure. A council meeting was held, and the Kurumba fined twenty-five rupees, which were credited to the god. Sixty-nine petty bazars and three beer taverns had been opened for the convenience of all classes of people that had assembled. One very old Badaga woman said that she was twelve years old when the first European was carried in a chair by the Todas, and brought up the ghāt to the Nīlgiris from Coimbatore. On Wednesday at 10 A.M. people from the adjoining villages were announced, and the Kota band, with the village people, went forward, greeted them, and brought them to the car. As each man approached it, he removed his turban, stooped over the pillow and laid his head on it, and then went to (535) join the ring for the dance. The dancers wore skirts made of white long-cloth, white and cream silks and satins with border of red and blue trimming, frock dresses, and dressing-gowns, while the coats, blouses, and jackets were of the most gaudy colours of silk, velvet, velveteen, tweed, and home-spun. As each group of people arrived, they went first to the temple door, saluted the god, and went to the basement of the car to venerate the deceased, and then proceeded to dance for an hour, received their supplies of rice, etc., and cleared off. Thursday and Friday were the grandest

489 up or down the Nilgiri escarpment by hand, on horseback, or on bullock carts (Ward 1821: lxv). With such a restriction it was impossible for Badagas to export fresh vegetables to other parts of India, even had they been interested in doing so (Grigg 1880: 480).

In 1899 a railway was completed from Coimbatore to Coonoor, and by 1913 it reached as far as Ootacamund. Its construction involved Badaga contractors and Badaga laborers, giving to many their first experience of earning cash by working. When the 1914-1918 War began there was thus a quick and easy means of exporting fresh vegetables to all parts of India, and even beyond.

During the years between the two wars trucks became a common phenomenon in the District, and roads were improved to accommodate them. Some of the Badagas who became middlemen purchased trucks to improve their business.

At this time a local bus service also began. In the years since World War II the network of bus routes has become so complex that there is no longer a Badaga hamlet anywhere which is more than three miles from a bus route leading to one of the towns. 57 different routes are now traveled within the Nilgiris District, some by several competing companies.

The existence of buses in such profusion has helped the Badagas in more matters than marketing. They are now able to go to town frequently -- typically once a week -- and thus their children can attend high school and even college without having to lose their close contact with the home. Literacy and newspapers have spread, too, with the help of the easy transportation system. Literacy today is quite as high in the rural population of the Nilgiris as it is in Madras City, according to a survey which I conducted: in 1963, 77.8% of Badaga males, and 51.8% of females, were literate; whereas in 1961 69.6% of Madras City males, and 48.2%

231 caused some rearers of livestock to start keeping compost pits. In
654 each hamlet or village there is usually a grassy clearing or raised
368 platform where male representatives meet and Badagas gather to chit-
chat. A large tree (often a Ficus sp.) may shade this meeting place.
512 Some Badaga women still must fetch water from nearby springs or
streams, but many Badaga hamlets and villages now have water piped to
368 faucets set near house-rows. A burial-cremation center is within easy
walking distance from each Badaga community. Most Badaga communities
491 have roads running to or through them, and a fair number of these
363 roads are asphalted. Scheduled buses run over some roads, and a few
494 Badagas now drive individually or jointly owned cars, buses, station
•493 wagons, and trucks.

Houses. Prior to 1840 the Badagas lived in a house type with
175 front porches and two rooms separated by a wall with a door. A small
342 front door led into one room, and there was a fireplace in the other
[354] darker room. Thatched roofs were supported by posts, and walls made
(824) with bamboos or reeds woven between the posts were then daubed. How-
(333) ever, some houses had clay and stone walls (Harkness 1832: 36; Birch
1838: 103; Hough 1829: 89). According to data obtained by Jagor
342 (1876: 193-194), each thatched clay and stone house in an examined
house-row had an entranceway leading on the right to a front room.
This room had a right side storage platform and a mortar built into
the floor on the left. From the front room a door led to a bathroom
extending the full width of the house, and another door led to a
(354) kitchen paralleling the front room. The fireplace for cooking was